

Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

This guidance applies to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) meal patterns for preschoolers (ages 1-4) in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP. The SSO follows the NSLP and SBP preschool meal patterns. The requirements for the preschool meal patterns are the same as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and are defined by the USDA's final rule, *Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*.

For information on the preschool meal patterns and crediting foods, refer to the CSDE's guide, *Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*, and visit the "[Grains Component for Preschoolers](#)" section of the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



Smoothie ingredients that credit toward the preschool meal patterns include full-strength vegetable juice and pureed vegetables (vegetables component); full-strength fruit juice and pureed fruits (fruits component); milk that meets the meal pattern requirements (milk component); and yogurt or soy yogurt (meat/meat alternates component). Creditable ingredients in smoothies must provide at least the minimum creditable amount to credit toward the preschool meal patterns. The minimum creditable amounts are $\frac{1}{8}$ cup for the vegetables component; $\frac{1}{8}$ cup for the fruits component; $\frac{1}{4}$ cup for the milk component (applies to smoothies only); and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup for yogurt.

School food authorities (SFAs) must maintain appropriate documentation to indicate the crediting information for smoothies. For example, to credit a strawberry smoothie as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component and 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component, the documentation must indicate that the serving contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed strawberries and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt.

If a smoothie contains less than the full-required serving of a component, the menu must include an additional food from that component to meet the full requirement.



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Required Crediting Documentation

To credit smoothies made on site, SFAs must have a standardized recipe that indicates the meal pattern contribution of each component in the serving. For information on standardized recipes, visit the “[Crediting Foods Prepared on Site in Preschool Menus](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

To credit commercial smoothies, SFAs must obtain a product formulation statement (PFS) or Child Nutrition (CN) label (if available). For information on CN labels and PFS forms, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Product Formulation Statements](#) and [Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labeling Program](#); and the USDA’s PFS forms and [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statement](#). For additional guidance, visit the “[Crediting Commercial Processed Products in Preschool Menus](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Recommended Daily Limit for Smoothies

The USDA recommends limiting smoothies to one preschool meal or snack per day. For example, if a smoothie is served at breakfast, the preschool menus for lunch and snack should not include a smoothie.

Crediting Fruits and Vegetables in Smoothies

Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies credit only as **juice** toward the vegetables component or fruits component. Crediting is based on the volume (cups) of pureed fruits and vegetables per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains ½ cup of pureed strawberries credits as ½ cup of fruit juice. SFAs must document the amount of pureed fruits and vegetables per serving (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document).

- **Juice limit:** Juice credits as the vegetables component or fruits component at only one preschool meal or ASP snack per day. Juice includes 100 percent juice (fresh, frozen, or made from concentrate), including fruit juice, vegetable juice, and juice blends; pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies; frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice; and juice from canned fruit served in 100 percent juice. For example, if the menu planner credits pureed blueberries in a smoothie as the fruits component at breakfast, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or the vegetables component at lunch or ASP snack. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP](#).
- **Mixed fruits and vegetables:** Smoothies that contain a mix of pureed fruits and vegetables, or 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice blends, credit based on the greatest fruit or vegetable ingredient. For commercial products, the smoothie credits as the fruits component if the first juice ingredient is fruit juice. If the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice, the product credits as the vegetables component. For smoothies made on site, the smoothie credits as the fruits

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component if fruit juice is the greatest juice ingredient in the standardized recipe. If the greatest juice ingredient is vegetable juice, the smoothie credits as the vegetables component.

- **Breakfast:** The preschool breakfast meal pattern requires a serving of vegetables, fruits, or both. Smoothies that contain the required amount of juice (including pureed fruits and vegetables) for each age group may credit as the entire vegetables and fruits component at breakfast. For example, a serving of smoothie that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed mangoes and carrots credits as the full fruits component for ages 3-4.
- **Lunch:** The preschool lunch meal pattern requires a serving of the fruits component and a serving of vegetables component. Lunch menus cannot offer a smoothie and juice as the only two servings of fruits and vegetables because both credit as juice. For example, the lunch menu cannot offer a strawberry smoothie as the fruits component and tomato juice as the vegetables component. At least one of the required servings of the vegetables component or fruits component must be a whole fruit or vegetable (i.e., fresh, frozen, canned, or dried).
- **Snack:** The ASP meal pattern requires two of the five components. Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies may credit as either the entire fruits component or the entire vegetables component, but not both in the same snack. Smoothies containing juice and milk may credit as either juice or milk, but not both in the same snack. The snack menu cannot include juice (including pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies) when milk is the only other snack component.

The examples below illustrate these requirements. The required servings for the snack components in the preschool meal pattern are $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce of meat/meat alternates, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruits, and $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce equivalent of grains.



- **Example 1:** A smoothie recipe contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed fruit (credits as fruit juice) and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of unflavored low-fat milk per serving. The menu planner may choose to credit the smoothie as either the full fruits component or the full milk component, but not both in the same snack. To be reimbursable, the snack must include the full serving of a second component that is not juice, fruit, or milk (i.e., meat/meat alternates, grains, or vegetables). For example, the snack menu could include a 1-ounce whole-grain corn muffin (grains component) as the second component.
- **Example 2:** A smoothie recipe contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed fruit (credits as fruit juice) and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of unflavored low-fat milk per serving. The pureed fruit provides the full fruits component. However, the milk cannot credit as the full milk component because it is less than $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. To be reimbursable, the snack must include the full serving of a second component that is not juice, fruit, or milk (i.e., meat/meat alternates, grains, or

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vegetables). For example, the snack menu could include ½ cup of diced cucumbers (vegetables component) as the second component.

The smoothies in these examples cannot credit as the milk component for age 1 because the preschool meal patterns require unflavored whole milk for age 1.

Crediting Milk in Smoothies

Milk in smoothies credits as the milk component based on the amount per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains ½ cup of milk credits as ½ cup of the milk component. SFAs must document the amount of milk per serving (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document).

- **Allowable types of milk:** Milk must be unflavored whole milk for age 1; and unflavored low-fat (1%) or unflavored fat-free milk for ages 2-4. Flavored milk does not credit in the preschool meal patterns.
- **Minimum creditable amount:** The minimum creditable amount of milk in a smoothie is ¼ cup. SFAs must have a standardized recipe or PFS to document the type and amount of milk per serving (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document).

Crediting Yogurt in Smoothies

Yogurt or soy yogurt in smoothies credits as the meat/meat alternates component based on the amount per serving. A ½-cup serving of yogurt credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. SFAs must document the amount of yogurt per serving (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document).

- **Sugar limit for yogurt:** Yogurt and soy yogurt cannot contain more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces (no more than 3.83 grams per ounce). For information on the crediting requirements for yogurt, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP](#).
- **Milk substitution:** The addition of yogurt to a smoothie is not a substitution for fluid milk in the preschool meal patterns. Fluid milk must be offered in all meals to meet the milk component requirement.

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Additional Ingredients

Smoothies may include additional noncreditable ingredients to improve flavor and consistency, such as oatmeal and peanut butter. However, these ingredients do not credit toward the preschool meal patterns.

Crediting Example

The example below shows how a smoothie made with blueberry puree, low-fat yogurt, fat-free milk, and oatmeal could credit toward the preschool meal patterns.

Blueberry smoothie recipe	
Ingredient	Meal pattern contribution ¹
Frozen blueberry puree, ½ cup	½ cup of fruit juice (fruits component) ²
Low-fat blueberry yogurt, ½ cup	1 ounce of meat/meat alternates
Low-fat milk, 4 fluid ounces	4 fluid ounces of milk ³
Oatmeal, 2 tablespoons	None (does not credit in smoothies)
<p>¹ If a creditable ingredient does not provide the full meal pattern component (minimum amount), the menu must include additional servings of that component to meet the preschool meal patterns.</p> <p>² Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies count toward the juice limit. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP.</p> <p>³ The minimum creditable amount of milk in a smoothie is ¼ cup. If a smoothie contains less than the full serving, the menu must include the additional amount milk to provide the full milk component.</p>	

This smoothie recipe cannot credit as the milk component for age 1 because the preschool meal patterns for age 1 require unflavored whole milk.



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Commercial Products

Commercial smoothies credit the same as smoothies made on site. Product formulation and labeling can vary greatly because commercial smoothies do not have a federal standard of identity. To credit commercial smoothies in preschool meals and snacks, SFAs must obtain a PFS (or CN label, if available) stating the amount of all creditable ingredients per serving, such as pureed fruits and vegetables, juice, yogurt, and milk (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document).



- **Crediting pureed vegetables/fruits:** Commercial smoothies made with pureed fruits/vegetables credit only as juice toward the fruits component or vegetables component. Crediting is based on the volume of fruits/vegetables after pureeing and before freezing. The product label must include a statement regarding the “percent juice content,” which is required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for beverages made with fruit/vegetable juice or puree. For example, an 8-fluid ounce smoothie made from fruit puree labeled with “contains 50% juice” credits as 4 fluid ounces ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of juice. SFAs may need to obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to document the amount of pureed fruit in the product.

Concentrated fruit puree and concentrated juice are added sugars. They do not credit in smoothies, unless they are reconstituted to full-strength fruit puree or full-strength juice.

- **Crediting milk:** Milk credits as the milk component when used as an ingredient in commercial smoothies. The product documentation must attest that commercial mixes with milk are made using ingredients that meet federal, state, and local definitions for fluid milk.
- **Crediting yogurt:** Yogurt or soy yogurt that meets the preschool sugar limit credits as the meat/meat alternates component when used as an ingredient in commercial smoothies. The product documentation must attest that commercial mixes with yogurt are made in compliance with the federal definition for yogurt.

The addition of yogurt to a smoothie is not a substitution for fluid milk in the preschool meal patterns. Fluid milk must be offered in all meals to meet the milk component requirement.

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- **Limit for crediting amount:** The total creditable amount in a smoothie cannot exceed the volume served. For example, ½ cup of a commercial smoothie cannot credit as 1 cup of juice.
- **Noncreditable commercial smoothies:** Probiotic dairy drinks, drinkable yogurt, and yogurt drinks are not smoothies, and do not credit in the preschool meal patterns. Commercial smoothies that contain dietary supplements (such as whey protein powder) or herbal supplements (such as ginkgo biloba, ginseng, and echinacea) do not credit in the preschool meal patterns.

SFAs must refer to the product's PFS to check for 1) volumes of pureed fruits and vegetables prior to freezing; and 2) documentation that milk and yogurt (if included) meet the preschool meal pattern requirements (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document).

Commercial smoothies cannot credit in preschool meals and ASP snacks without a PFS (or a CN label for commercial fruit and vegetable smoothies that contain yogurt). SFAs must review PFS forms for accuracy.

Signage

The USDA encourages SFAs to provide information, as appropriate, that helps children understand what foods are in their meals and snacks. For example, the preschool menu could list “peach and milk smoothie” or “strawberry, yogurt, and milk smoothie.” Menu planners should also inform serving staff when meals include smoothies, so they are aware of how these foods contribute to the preschool meal patterns.



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Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/AcceptDocumentationSNP.pdf>

Calculating Sugar Limits for Yogurt in the CACFP – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/calculating-sugar-limits-yogurt-cacfp>

Choose Yogurts that are Lower in Sugar – Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/choose-yogurts-are-lower-sugar>

Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditJuiceSNPpreschool.pdf>

Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditYogurtSNPpreschool.pdf>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Fruits Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#Fruits>

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage)

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents>

Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning>

Milk Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#Milk>

Product Formulation Statement (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Meats-Meat_Alternates_Fillable_508.pdf

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Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and NSLP Afterschool Snacks (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Veg_Subgroups_Fruits_Fillable_508.pdf

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/PFS.pdf>

Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/ResourcesPreschoolMealPattern.pdf>

Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast – Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-meats-and-meat-alternates-breakfast>

Serving Milk in the CACFP – Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-milk-cacfp>

Smoothies (New England Dairy):

<https://www.newenglanddairy.com/smoothies/>

Standardized Recipe Form for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/StandardizedRecipeSchools.doc>

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturePFStipsheet.pdf>

USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019 and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

Vegetable Subgroups in the CACFP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/VegetableGroupsCACFP.pdf>

Vegetables Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#Vegetables>

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For more information, refer to the CSDE's guide, *Menu Planning Guide for the NSLP and SBP Preschool Meal Patterns*, and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditSmoothiesSNPpreschool.pdf>.

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- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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